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EXONYMS: CATEGORIES AND DEGREE OF USE OF EXONYMS

Donor-recommended exonyms for historical topographic features in Israel

Paper submitted by Israel**

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After more than 30 years of toponymic activity on the part of the United Nations, it is clear that the use of exonyms cannot be completely eliminated. During all these years the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names and the UN Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names have repeatedly stressed the importance of the use of standardized endonyms in international use, and at the same time have advocated the consequent reduction in the number of exonyms.

According to the latest United Nations definition [1], an exonym is "a name used in a specific language for a geographical feature situated outside the area where that language has official satus, and differing in its form from the name used in the official language or languages of the area where the geographical feature is situated. ..... The United Nations recommend minimizing the use of exonyms in international usage".

Many countries have published and brought to the attention of the United Nations lists of exonyms in their own particular languages, covering selected regions outside their political and toponymic jurisdiction, or even the entire world. The reasons for the retention of exonyms are of a historical nature on the one hand, and of a linguistic-phonological character on the other. Exonyms resulting from the latter set of conditions can perhaps not be eliminated, for quite objective reasons. But historical exonyms or traditional names can, at least in principle, be greatly reduced in number.

In a paper under the title "Donor-recommended exonyms: a different approach to traditional names" [2] presented by Israel to the Sixth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names in 1992 it was proposed that a specific country – to be termed in the present context the donor country – can request, or at least recommend, that all but a limited number of toponyms in its own territory be always referred to by their endonyms when used by the international community, i.e. by receiver countries. The resulting residue of a limited number of geographical names would then form the basis for a list of donor-recommended exonyms.

This principle is now being followed in Israel, and its application has two aspects, one external and one internal. The first, external, aspect is the one outlined above, namely agreeing to the use of a specified list of donor-recommended exonyms by foreign toponymic, cartographic, touristic and other institutions in their publications, though preferably together with the respective endonym, e.g. in parentheses or in a different font. Of course the exonyms will take different forms in different languages. The best known example is Jerusalem. The Hebrew endonym of Jerusalem is ירושלים, romanized Yerushalayim by the official romanization system. Different linguistic communities use different exonyms, mostly resulting from different translations of the Bible: Jerusalem (English, German), Jérusalem (French), Jerusalen (Spanish), Gerusalemme (Italian), Jeruzalem (Dutch, Afrikaans), Urshalīm (Arabic, Persian), Hiruharama (Māori), Ιερουσαλήμ (Greek) and others. All these forms can be used in their respective languages. The same is true for other topographic features.

The second aspect is of an internal character. Romanized maps printed by Israeli cartographic institutions, including the *Survey of Israel*, national surveying and mapping authority (which in the past printed exonyms for only seven topographic features in its romanized topographic maps) will now carry the recommended

exonyms, too – mainly in their English conventional form. In official maps they will be printed after the respective endonyms. Roman-script road signs, however, which for reasons of legibility by car drivers are limited in the amount of text they carry, will provide only the English exonyms. This refers to the white, green and blue signboards maintained by the Public Works Department of the Ministry of National Infrastructure, and the orange-brown ones designed by the Government Tourism Authority.

This decision, reached by the Commission on Geographical Names Orthography, on which all principal public producers of maps and road signs are represented, was arrived at during (and in parallel with) discussions on possible changes in the romanization of Hebrew in official mapping and road signposting [3]. Both these principles are intended to simplify map use and road navigation by foreign tourists visiting Israel. For a list of the main participant bodies on this Commission see [4].

At the time of writing (September 1997) the list of donor-recommended exonyms for Israel, prescribed by the above Commission, is as follows.

English exonym	Hebrew endonym, romanized	Hebrew endonym
Akko (not Acre)	'Akko	עכו
Banias	Panyas	פניאס
Caesarea *	Ḥorbat Qesari	חרבת קיסרי
Cana	Kafr Kanna	כפר כנא
Capernaum	Kefar-Naḥum	כפר-נחום
Coral Beach	Ḥof Almog	חוף אלמוג
Dead Sea	Yam haMelaḥ	ים המלח
Haifa	Ḥefa	חיפה
Jerusalem	Yerushalayim	ירושלים
Jordan River	Nehar Yarden	נהר ירדן
Judean Desert	Midbar Yehuda	מדבר יהודה
Magdala *	Migdal	מגדל
Masada	Meẓada	מצדה
Mount of Beatitudes	Har haOsher	הר האושר
Mount Carmel	Har Karmel	הר כרמל
Mount Moriah	Har haMoriyya	הר המוריה
Mount of Olives	Har haZetim	הר הזיתים
Mount Scopus	Har haẒofim	הר הצופים
Mount Tabor	Har Tavor	הר תבור
Mount Zion	Har Ẓiyyon	הר ציון
Nazareth	Naẓerat	נצרת
Old Jaffa	Yafo	יפו
Samaria	Shomeron	שמרון
Sea of Galilee	Yam Kinneret	ים כנרת
Tabigha	'En Sheva'	עין שבע
Tiberias	Teverya	טבריה
Zefat (not Safed)	Ẓefat	צפת

*) Antiquity site only, not the town.

Transliteration of the endonyms in the above table, too, follows the romanization rules in force at the time of writing. As reported in [3], these rules are now under review.

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All other toponyms in Israel should be printed in foreign maps in their endonymic form – transliterated or transcribed, as the case may be into the other languages or scripts, but not exonymized. Thus, Elat and not Eilat, Netanya and not Nathania, Ashdod and not Asdod, Be'er-Sheva' and not Beersheba, etc.

Notes

[1] United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, Working Group on Toponymic Terminology, *Glossary of Toponymic Terminology*, ed. N. Kadmon, convenor. Version 4, term No. 81.

[2] "Donor-recommended exonyms: a different approach to traditional names". *Sixth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names*, New York, 1992, vol. II, Technical Papers, p. 365-366.

[3] "Theoretical and practical considerations for changes in the romanization of Hebrew". 18th Session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, Geneva, 1996, Working Paper No. 5.

[4] "National report of Israel for the period 1992-1997". Paper presented to the Seventh United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, New York, 13-22 January 1998.

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